

## The Dentist Is In ... Healthy Smiles for Your Kids



*COL Jeffrey Chaffin  
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**A** healthy oral care routine should become a familiar habit for your children. Beginning a healthy routine early can teach children good behaviors that will continue throughout their adolescence and into adulthood.

Of course babies cannot care for their mouths and teeth alone, but proper oral care is important for them, too.

Wipe your baby's gums with a warm, soft cloth. Cleaning their teeth and gums at least once per day, especially before bedtime, helps to remove harmful bacteria that can damage gums and new teeth. Try to avoid giving your baby a bottle before nap or bedtime. If necessary, only give them water to drink at these times. Milk and juice contain sugars that can lead to tooth decay and plaque buildup.

Daily brushing and flossing are important parts of good oral health care routines. Brushing and flossing prevent cavities and gum disease, which are caused when excess food debris or drink residues form tartar and plaque

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## Protect Your Teeth after the Holidays

**A**s a new year begins and the holiday season comes to a close, it is a good time to make a commitment to your oral health and protect your teeth from decay. Sugary foods are enjoyed more often around the holidays, and they can lead to tooth decay. Eating too much sugar may cause bacteria in your mouth to multiply rapidly and release an acid that eats away at tooth enamel. When you eat sugar and it stays on your teeth for long stretches, especially multiple times throughout the day, you have a higher risk of cavities. You can help take care of your teeth with these simple steps:

**Brush and floss regularly.** The American Dental Association® recommends that you brush your teeth twice daily. If you cannot brush your teeth right away, you may lower risk of cavities by drinking water or rinsing your mouth after a meal or after eating sugary foods.

**Chew sugarless gum.** Be sure to have sugarless gum handy when you finish a meal or snack high in sugar or carbohydrates. Research shows that chewing gum and eating candy that use

Xylitol as the sweetener reduces cavity formation. When bacteria in your mouth are exposed to sugar, they absorb the sugar and produce an acid byproduct that erodes your tooth

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**An Important Note About TRICARE Program Information:** At the time of printing, this information is current. It is important to remember that TRICARE policies and benefits are governed by public law and federal regulations. Changes to TRICARE programs are continually made as public law and/or federal regulations are amended. **Military treatment facility guidelines and policies may be different than those outlined in this publication.** For the most recent information, contact your TRICARE regional contractor, TRICARE Service Center, or local military treatment facility.

## The Dentist Is In ...

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that can damage teeth and gums. Brushing after each meal is ideal, and the American Dental Association® (ADA) recommends children brush at least twice a day to maintain healthy teeth. Brushing teeth in the morning after waking up and again before going to bed should become a regular part of your child's daily routine.

Parents and grandparents should make an effort to limit the sugary snacks and sweets children or grandchildren eat to help prevent cavities and other health issues. Sugar left on their teeth and inside the mouth helps bacteria to rapidly grow and causes tooth decay.

If your child plays sports, you should talk with their dentist about protecting their teeth with athletic mouth guards. Playing rough and without protection can seriously damage teeth and gums. With the TRICARE Dental Program (TDP), your children are covered for one athletic mouth guard per consecutive 12-month period at a 50 percent cost-share when it's fitted at a participating network dentist.

Teaching your children good dental health habits is not just important for their smiles, but for their overall health in the future. Research from the American Academy of Periodontology and the ADA shows that poor oral health is associated with more serious health conditions like cardiovascular disease and strokes. The good oral care habits your children form while they are young can help keep them healthy as adults.

Regular visits to the dentist are an important part of any healthy oral care routine. The TDP covers your children for two dental exams and cleanings per consecutive 12-month period. More information on your specific cost-shares can be viewed online.

To enroll in the TDP, or for more information about benefits and costs, and to find a network participating dentist near you, go to [www.tricare.mil/tdp](http://www.tricare.mil/tdp). ■

## You Can Quit Using Tobacco

**S**moking is the leading cause of preventable death in the United States. All forms of tobacco—including cigarettes, chewing tobacco and snuff—increase your risk of cancer. Smoking increases your risk of heart and lung disease and can lead to higher rates of hospitalizations, missed workdays, failed fitness evaluations and impaired night vision. Tobacco use can also cause problems with your oral health including:

- Stained teeth and tongue
- Dulled sense of taste and smell
- Slow healing after a tooth extraction or other surgery
- Difficulties in correcting cosmetic dental problems
- Gum disease
- Oral cancer

Quitting tobacco can be very difficult. It takes, on average, 11 attempts to quit smoking. That's why TRICARE is

dedicated to helping beneficiaries succeed in efforts to quit smoking. Two TRICARE initiatives are targeted specifically at helping you become tobacco-free:

- TRICARE's Smoking Quitlines—a telephone support and referral service where trained smoking-cessation coaches can provide information and guidance for helping you quit. Quitlines are available to all TRICARE beneficiaries in the United States who are not eligible for Medicare.
- The Department of Defense website [www.ucanquit2.org](http://www.ucanquit2.org)—this resource offers information about team-based programs to help you quit; materials for creating your own quit plan; and directions to local facilities, phone lines and live chats where you can receive help and encouragement.

For more information about the dental and health effects of tobacco use and how TRICARE can help you quit, visit [www.tricare.mil/tobaccocessation](http://www.tricare.mil/tobaccocessation). ■

## Protect Your Teeth after the Holidays

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enamel over time. But the artificial sweetener Xylitol cannot be broken down by these bacteria, so the number and strength of these bacteria decrease.

**Read the ingredients list.** When purchasing chewing gum, mints or beverages, check the labels—under nutrition facts and the ingredients list—for sugars. You can often tell that an ingredient is a type of sugar by looking for the suffix “-ose” at the end of the word, such as sucrose, maltose and lactose.

**Schedule your dental appointments.** Commit to your regular checkups and cleanings by scheduling your dental appointments

early this year. Most beneficiaries are covered to receive two regular dental appointments in a 12-month period. If you are pregnant or have diabetes, you may receive three checkups in that time.

For more information about covered preventive services, read “Take Advantage of Preventive Dental Services” in this issue. To learn about your benefits under the TRICARE Dental Program or to locate a network dentist, visit <https://mybenefits.metlife.com/tricare>. ■

## Medications That Can Affect Oral Health

**M**any medications prescribed for various health conditions can also have an impact on your mouth. For instance, a common side effect of some medications is dry mouth, which can increase your risk of tooth decay.

Dry mouth occurs when glands in your mouth do not produce enough saliva. In the absence of saliva, more food can collect around your teeth, and acids in your mouth may eat away at the protective covering of your teeth, called enamel.

In addition to promoting tooth decay, some medications can cause other problems including:

- Issues with your gums, cheek lining or tongue
- Staining of teeth

- Oral fungal infection (thrush)
- Problems with the jaw or other bone tissue

One type of treatment that can cause these problems is cancer drugs. Others include some antibiotics and steroids, antiseizure medicines, antidepressants and antianxiety drugs, decongestants and inhalers.<sup>1</sup> Be sure to let your dentist know what medications you are taking to learn what you can do to take care of your dental and oral health. ■

1. <http://oralhealth.deltadental.com/harvard/22,HD26>

## Know the Effects of Grinding Your Teeth

**T**ooth grinding is often caused by stress, but it may be difficult to know that you have the habit. Many adults grind their teeth in their sleep and, sometimes, the only way to know that you are doing it is through other symptoms such as:

- Dull headache
- Jaw soreness
- Teeth that are painful or loose
- Fractured teeth

If you think you have a problem with teeth grinding, see your dentist. He or she may recommend that you be fitted with a mouth guard that you can wear while you sleep. Your dentist or doctor may recommend that you use a muscle relaxant before you go to sleep as well.

The TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) covers mouth guards for teeth grinding in people age 13 and older, as well as athletic mouth guards, with applicable cost-shares. Mouth guards are limited to one per beneficiary per 12-month period.

Other ways to limit teeth grinding are to practice stress-reducing activities including exercise, meditation, counseling or other activities that help you relax.

To learn more about teeth grinding, visit the American Dental Association® consumer information website at [www.mouthhealthy.org](http://www.mouthhealthy.org). For information about what is covered under your TDP benefit, visit <https://mybenefits.metlife.com/tricare>. ■

## New TRICARE Dental Program Premium Rates

Effective Feb. 1, 2013, TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) monthly premium rates will change. These rate changes are regular annual increases that are part of the TDP contract. The following tables list your new TDP monthly premium rates. The premium amounts will be deducted from your military pay account or billed directly to you. Visit the TDP website at <https://mybenefits.metlife.com/tricare> for information regarding payment options. ■

Active Duty	
<b>Single Premium</b> (one family member)	\$10.66
<b>Family Premium</b> (more than one family member)	\$31.96

Selected Reserve of the Ready Reserve and Individual Ready Reserve (Special Mobilization Only)	
<b>Sponsor-Only Premium</b>	\$10.66
<b>Single Premium<sup>1</sup></b> (one family member, excluding sponsor)	\$26.64
<b>Family Premium</b> (more than one family member, excluding sponsor)	\$79.91
<b>Sponsor and Family Premium</b>	\$90.57

1. If both the sponsor and a single family member are enrolled, the premium due is the total of the sponsor-only premium and the single premium.

Individual Ready Reserve (Non-Special Mobilization)	
<b>Sponsor-Only Premium</b>	\$26.64
<b>Single Premium<sup>1</sup></b> (one family member, excluding sponsor)	\$26.64
<b>Family Premium</b> (more than one family member, excluding sponsor)	\$79.91
<b>Sponsor and Family Premium</b>	\$106.55

1. If both the sponsor and a single family member are enrolled, the premium due is the total of the sponsor-only premium and the single premium.

Your Annual Maximum Benefit
Under the TRICARE Dental Program, there is a \$1,300 annual maximum benefit per beneficiary, per plan year for non-orthodontic services. Each plan year begins May 1 and ends April 30. Payments for certain diagnostic and preventive services are not applied against the annual maximum. There is an additional \$1,200 maximum for dental care necessitated by an accident.

## Take Advantage of Preventive Dental Services

Your oral health is an important part of your overall health. Your teeth and gums need to be cared for with brushing, flossing and periodic checkups with your dentist. The TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) provides preventive dental care to you at no additional cost when you visit a network dentist.

All TDP beneficiaries may receive two routine dental checkups within each 12-month period. For pregnant women and people with diabetes, three visits are covered per 12-month period. Teeth cleaning and polishing are covered as part of the TDP's preventive services benefit. Other preventive dental care may be covered when you see the dentist for a specific dental problem or service such as fillings or surgeries on the gums or teeth. Cost-shares may apply.

Two fluoride treatments at a dental office are covered in a 12-month period; for more information about the benefits of fluoride, see "Fluoride Protects Your Teeth" in this issue.

For those under age 19, space maintainers are fully covered for posterior teeth, or teeth in the back of the mouth including molars. Space maintainers for anterior teeth, those in the front of the mouth, including cuspids and incisors, require a 20 percent cost-share.

Other dental treatments, including mouth guards, surgeries or X-rays, may be covered under diagnostic services and other benefits, and may include applicable cost-shares.

Early detection and prevention are key components to managing your oral and overall health, and the TDP is designed to give you access to this important care. Remember, a healthy body includes a healthy smile, and TRICARE encourages you to protect that smile by seeing your dentist regularly for exams and cleanings. ■

# Prevention and Treatment of Gum Disease

**P**eriodontal disease, or gum disease, is an infection caused by bacteria under the gums that can destroy the gums and bone and cause you to lose teeth.

The American Dental Association® (ADA) classifies gum disease in two stages based on severity: gingivitis (inflammation of the gums) and periodontitis (inflammation of the tooth-supporting structures). Gingivitis is the milder form of the disease and is usually reversible. Periodontitis is more serious and can cause greater damage to the gums, the bone surrounding the teeth and other areas of the body.

## Prevention

The ADA recommends the following oral care to prevent gum disease:

- Brush twice a day with an ADA-accepted fluoride toothpaste
- Floss daily
- Get regular professional cleanings and oral exams
- Eat a balanced diet
- Change toothbrushes every three to four months or sooner if the bristles become frayed with use
- Do not share toothbrushes

## Symptoms

Though gum disease can usually be prevented with the steps above, it is important to recognize the signs of gum disease to treat it early. The most common symptoms of gum disease are:

- Gums that bleed
- Gums that have pulled away from the teeth
- Loose teeth
- Persistent bad breath
- Pus between your teeth and gums
- Red, swollen or tender gums
- A change in the way teeth fit together or a change in the fit of partial dentures

If you experience any of these symptoms, you should see your dentist right away. It is also possible to have gum disease and not have any warning signs, so regular dental checkups are important.

## Risk Factors

Poor oral hygiene is the most obvious contributing factor for gum disease, but you could also be at risk because of a variety of other reasons. Some of these might surprise you:

- Age (gum disease is less common before ages 30–40)
- Gender (men are more likely to have gum disease than women)
- Crooked teeth
- Defective fillings
- Bridges that no longer fit properly
- Tobacco (smoking or chewing)
- Hormonal changes (e.g., with pregnancy or use of oral contraceptives)
- Systemic diseases (e.g., diabetes)
- Genetic susceptibility
- Some medications (e.g., steroids, antiepilepsy drugs, cancer drugs, oral contraceptives and calcium channel blockers used to treat heart disease)

## Treatments

Early gum disease can usually be treated with brushing, flossing or a cleaning at your dentist's office. But as gum disease progresses, other treatments may be needed such as:

- Medications, including mouth rinses, antibiotic gels or an antibiotic in pill form
- Surgery, including flap surgery or bone and tissue grafts to regain bone or tissue loss

These surgeries are covered by the TRICARE Dental Program (TDP), with cost-shares for some treatments and procedures. To learn more about the TDP benefit, visit <https://mybenefits.metlife.com/tricare>. For more information on gum disease, visit the ADA website at [www.ada.org](http://www.ada.org). ■

**Update:** The American Dental Association® Code on Dental Procedures and Nomenclature (CDT) Codes for 2013 are being updated. MetLife dentists are receiving specific details of the CDT Code changes.



## Avoid Overbrushing Your Teeth and Gums

**B**rushings regularly is important for your teeth and gums, but overdoing it can cause problems. Brushing your teeth too often, with too much pressure or with the wrong toothbrush can push back your gums and wear down the enamel on your teeth.

Here are some tips to avoid overbrushing:

- Use a soft-bristled toothbrush and stay away from brushes that are medium- or hard-bristled.
- Do not brush in a sawing motion back and forth across your teeth. Gently brush in a circular motion.
- Use an electric toothbrush, which can help you avoid brushing too vigorously.

Other factors, such as a genetic risk for receding gums or clenching or grinding your teeth, can increase your risk for damage from overbrushing as well.

If your gums recede, or are pushed back, because of overbrushing, it will expose part of the sensitive root of your tooth. This can produce sensitivity when eating or drinking, or when brushing and flossing.

Here are some tips for relieving sensitivity:

- Use a soft-bristled toothbrush
- Use a desensitizing toothpaste
- Avoid acidic foods
- Use fluoridated dental products

For more tips on maintaining good dental hygiene, visit the American Dental Association® website [www.mouthhealthy.org](http://www.mouthhealthy.org). ■

## Fluoride Protects Your Teeth

**T**hanks to fluoride, tooth decay is less common for Americans today than it was before the 1960s. Fluoride is a mineral that prevents tooth decay by keeping enamel—the protective surface of the tooth—strong and solid. When a person eats sugar, bacteria in the mouth produce acid that eats away at the tooth enamel, which can cause cavities. Fluoride can help strengthen the enamel and prevent cavities.

The TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) covers fluoride treatments as part of preventive dental care. Two topical fluoride treatments received in a dental office are covered in one 12-month period. Most people get fluoride from the public water supply, either from their drinking water or from food and beverages prepared in areas with fluoridated water. Community water fluoridation has led to a dramatic decline in tooth decay over the past 65 years.<sup>1</sup> Other sources of fluoride include toothpaste and mouth rinses, or gels and pastes that may be prescribed by a health care professional. You can visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s “My Water’s Fluoride” website at [apps.nccd.cdc.gov/MWF/Index.asp](http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/MWF/Index.asp)

to learn if your community’s water supply contains the recommended level of fluoride, which is 0.7 milligrams per liter of water.

Everyone needs their teeth exposed to a small amount of fluoride daily to help prevent dental cavities. Fluoride is even more important for younger children when their teeth are developing. In regular checkups, your child’s dentist will be able to tell if your child is getting the right amount of fluoride.

If you and your family mainly drink bottled water, or if have a home water filter, you may not be getting the fluoride you need. You can check the label on your bottled water, or visit the American Dental Association® website at [www.mouthhealthy.org](http://www.mouthhealthy.org) for more information about home filters and bottled water. To learn more about your TDP benefits, including fluoride treatments, visit <https://mybenefits.metlife.com/tricare>. ■

1. [www.cdc.gov/fluoridation/fact\\_sheets/cwf\\_qa.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/fluoridation/fact_sheets/cwf_qa.htm)



## Did You Know?

**W**hen George Washington became the first president of the United States in 1789, he had only one tooth left in his mouth.

George Washington's false teeth were not made of wood. He had dentures made from a combination of human teeth, animal teeth, and ivory.<sup>1</sup>

Your mouth produces two to four pints of saliva, or spit, in a day.<sup>2</sup> That is about enough to fill an empty gallon-sized milk carton in two days.

Teeth are like fingerprints—everyone has different dental patterns, even identical twins. ■

1. [http://georgewashington.si.edu/kids/pp4m\\_5.html](http://georgewashington.si.edu/kids/pp4m_5.html)

2. <http://kidshealth.org/kid/talk/yucky/spit.html>



TRICARE

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## TRICARE Dental Program Offers Premium-Free Coverage for Survivors

**T**RICARE is proud to honor the sacrifice of military families by extending benefits to surviving family members when a sponsor dies. Spouses are eligible for dental coverage under the TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) Survivor Benefit for three years after the date of the sponsor's death. Children remain eligible until reaching age 21, or age 23 if enrolled in a full-time course of study at an approved institution of higher learning, and if the sponsor provided over 50 percent of the financial support.

Survivors who were not enrolled in the TDP before the sponsor's death may still take advantage of the TDP Survivor Benefit. The benefit also applies to family members of the Selected Reserve of the Ready Reserve and Individual Ready Reserve (special mobilization category), regardless of whether the sponsor was on active duty orders or enrolled in the TDP at the time of his or her death.

The TDP Survivor Benefit offers premium-free coverage, but family members are responsible for cost-shares for certain services.

When the three-year TDP Survivor Benefit period ends, surviving spouses become eligible for the TRICARE Retiree Dental Program (TRDP). For more information about TRDP, visit [www.tricare.mil/trdp](http://www.tricare.mil/trdp). ■

## TRICARE Dental Program Resources

<https://mybenefits.metlife.com/tricare>

I-855-MET-TDPI  
(I-855-638-8371) (CONUS)  
I-855-MET-TDP2  
(I-855-638-8372) (OCONUS)  
I-855-MET-TDP3  
(I-855-638-8373) (TDD/TTY)

### Claims Filing

CONUS:  
MetLife TRICARE Dental Program  
P.O. Box 14181  
Lexington, KY 40512

OCONUS:  
MetLife TRICARE Dental Program  
P.O. Box 14182  
Lexington, KY 40512

### Beneficiary Web Enrollment

[www.tricare.mil/bwe](http://www.tricare.mil/bwe)

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